COMMUNITIES AND KINGS, FAITH IN THE YOUTH

By Lucas Veira Sand

On Faith Expressions of Youth and Challenges in the Southern Cone Today

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Preface

Whenever a study attempts to make a certain analysis of ample subjects such as expressions of faith and challenges –through information coming from the Southern Cone of Latin America in this case– a dynamic relationship is required. Pure data from the region, its later analysis, the specific experience and the use of conceptual tools become indispensable. To offer and to share information are important exchanges, but something else is also needed: the analysis, the perspective, and the consideration of conflicting points. This would summon the churches of the Lutheran World Federation more to a dynamic enrichment rather than to a mere exchange of information.

Three dimensions (axes) are developed through the survey. First, what are usually called *"faith expressions" and their forms*, which constitute a much-discussed subject, as much in Christianity as in other fora, especially nowadays. In addition, it is indispensable to have an idea about how *youth participation* influences the directions undertaken by the churches--their decisions. Lastly, youth phenomena and the institutional culture of a church cannot be considered without noticing certain aspects: the *social context*, the *challenges that communities live*, and the *generation's realities*--in other words, everything that offers a specific base and a background. The general methodological aim of the present study is not addressed to follow one unique point (developing it within itself) or to consider the three separately. On the contrary, the production of this study will find its wealth in the tension among these three axes, always in relationship.

To carry out such a project, which I hope is just a part of later ones on these subjects, has been quite an arduous task, but also substantial. So I hope that this survey, rather than offering fixed answers, will encourage tasks, reflections and reactions within the LWF member churches, from the perspective of such a dynamic area as youth.

I acknowledge the opportunity offered by the Youth in Church and Society desk from the LWF Department for Mission and Development. Furthermore, I give thanks for the valuable contributions of the LWF staff. I am also thankful for the possibility of publishing this study, both in English and in Spanish, and of making it available to the churches throughout the LWF communion. Finally, and very importantly for me, I want to underline the invaluable contributions and discussions facilitated by young people in the region involved. To these I express my deep appreciation.

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I. About the Current Study

"It is not that time passes; rather, it is we who are passing through time". (Anonymous Saying)

Introduction

Speaking on a study on faith expressions and challenges, somebody opportunely indicated to me: "I could think of one thousand themes"; "and there must already be a thousand studies available", I also thought. It was clear that such a project needed several foci, even beyond the geographic one. Moreover, it was also important to avoid duplication using concepts and definitions that had already been widely developed. Furthermore, when this study was planned, part of its methodology was designed to involve the phenomenon of the pilgrimages, considering LWF-YICAS forthcoming events in 2001. Major circumstances forced the postponement of such events, so that a certain stage of the survey had to be redefined --especially the aspect regarding participatory observation as a method. Perhaps these three data may illustrate the new orientations and modifications that the study was experiencing.

But why should such a study be needed? Whenever relationships between expressions of faith and current social phenomena facing youth in Latin America are researched, you are likely to come across few bibliographies or relevant studies. These relationships are crucial to the consideration and addressing of current challenges. How could alternatives to current free-market-based faith models be promoted? This is a major question involving certain institutional aspects. With this premise, the subject is to be addressed using tools that are not always used in Latin American LWF member churches. These could lead to provision of alternative frameworks in which to interpret the social challenges facing today's churches. What is more, contemporary church leaders and congregations might take into account new forms of *accompanying* youth, and *being accompanied* by them.

Therefore, the term "faith expressions" is to be used not only to refer to such expressions within the framework of more or less institutionalized Christian manifestation (as for example a liturgical celebration), but also in the acts of daily social life. The atheist is also a person of deep religious faith, some will even say[1]. It would be relatively simple to affirm that "faith" involves both phenomena and definitions and approaches to it. These five letters of incommensurable comprehensiveness with respect to its definition, already have a huge bibliography, both Christian and from other religions and so-called "secular" scopes.

It is necessary to add certain components, which begin to delimit a focus and simultaneously intensify the challenges of the study. Firstly, we may consider general aspects. If we speak about manifestations of faith in young people, we should note that youth is one of the shortest stages of life (beyond the fact that the criterion for "youth" has varied historically as well as the way in which it is considered) and probably the most intense emotionally. On the one hand, changes and biological maturation are decisive, entailing intense affection and continuous recognition of oneself. On the other hand, this is related to what it means to be young in this historical period:

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[1] Lacan, J.: *Seminario 7: La ética del psicoanálisis*, class 15. "Atheistic faith" indicates a deep belief in the nonexistence of a full completion. Lacan names this full completion *Great Other*, a place sanctioning the speech from a [illusory] terrain of absence of the lack -that human attribute that make people beings of desire.

quite often, during this stage, decisive transitions from the "world of the infant" to the exigencies and perspectives of contemporary adult life take place.

The culture, the epoch and the places play a decisive influence. They also provide elements for the contours of faith expressions. These have very singular forms and idiosyncratic ways among young people currently, which the present study will seek to approach. Furthermore, the roles which churches play in the life of the young people, and the ways that churches offer as alternatives for living the faith, are to be considered. These churches also contain the anxieties of their members, and the forms that they have to develop spiritual life within them. On the other hand, the members may invite the churches towards the movement within the social body, questioning them at the same time.

The study pursues the following *objectives*:

- To *develop* a *different way* of understanding the realities of young people and their faith expressions nowadays, using frames of reference limited by the minimal development available on this subject as a whole, and in the region in particular. This way of understanding should encourage a more comprehensive understanding of working and living together as partners.

- To *contribute* and to collaborate with the LWF member churches in the *understanding* of the present challenges for church and society. This study is addressed to both young people and adults (lay and clergy are included). It intends to encourage youth work (and ministry) in those churches, especially in the Southern Cone, where the youth are becoming organized and youth organizations or churches have a difficult task in addressing issues related to youth.

- To *provide* some basic *conceptual tools* in relationship as another background. This study should become a resource for the local churches and/or should encourage the work in different areas of ministry, both those related to the youth and those not directly related.

About the methods of the study

The study will involve both the bibliography --in English and Spanish-- as a theoretical framework and the processing of the information from the churches obtained by means of the determined questionnaires as a set of data, as well as observations sifted by human experience. Thus, this survey will follow both some scientific forms and channels (sociological, anthropological) and other disciplinary forms (psychological).

In order to collect data from the region, information and other available studies were requested from member churches, in an attempt to collect as much the verbal experiences as the lived and acted ones. Therefore, a *questionnaire* was prepared in order to obtain data referring to (a) expressions of faith, (b) the existence and manner of young people integrated into the stages of participation and decision-making within the churches, and (c) the representations of the young people in relation to youth, the society and the Church. These issues could be summarized in the

question: **How do young people of the Southern Cone relate to faith, to the challenges facing the churches and to their current realities?**

<u>Foci in the object of the study</u>

As an **age criterion**, the category *youth* refers to those aged 13 to 30 years, emphasizing that adolescents constitute a considerable percentage of the young people in the Southern Cone. Thus, two age groups were established: (a) 13-19: <u>Teenagers</u>; (b) 20-30: <u>Young adults</u>.

As a **geographic focus**, the survey includes the region of the Southern Cone of America (that is to say, it will involve the following countries: Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Paraguay and Uruguay). The scarcity of this kind of studies available in the region as well as the advantage of the contacts established in the region and are the rationale. Information and elements of other regions could also be considered, although only for purposes of comparison.

In addition, **specific conceptual tools** will be used within the theoretical framework. Sociologically, the present context is to be considered (globalization; fragmentation of speech; necessity of non-rational communication). Furthermore, contributions will be taken from anthropology (the domestic community; gerontocracy; human relationships in Late Capitalism); and psychological and psychoanalytic tools (the three group basic assumptions).

Guidelines and terminology

The questionnaire used can be found at the end of the survey (Appendix 2). The main concepts will be used throughout the study, and they shall be opportunely quoted. In order to facilitate the understanding of auxiliary concepts or non-familiar terms, a *Brief Glossary* has been added at the end of the study (Appendix 1), hoping to clarify the use of such words.

Faith: A final definition is difficult due to the diversity of foci. Certain anthropological attributes of *the manifestations of faith* are however assumed: (a) They are phenomena whose field exceeds the rational; (b) they involve a deep conviction or belief; (c) they contain a great affective load; and (c) they happen in varied situations of daily life, both ritualized and non-ritualized.

Challenges: This is a call, a question, or any collection of several of them, which question human beings and their institutions at those points which are structural and critical.

Market: It is the totality of all the private exchanges. At the present time, this is considered as a global entity, in which the economy is subordinated to finance, with a tendency to accumulate capital, and where the laws of supply and demand decide on aspects that go beyond them. We will use the term "*Market*" to refer to the relationship between these form and a faith system which involves it, and the term "*market*" for specific or local systems of exchange.

Church: We will maintain the distinction between *Church* as the "universal communion" and *churches* as every one of the national or local organizations. *Congregation* is used to designate a local community. For practical purposes, we will use the following abbreviations:
IECLB Church of the Lutheran Confession in Brazil;
ILCH Lutheran Church in Chile;

IELCH Evangelical Lutheran Church in Chile;
IERP Evangelical Church of the River Plate;
IELU United Evangelical Lutheran Church.

Youth: The distinction between the two groups mentioned above will be maintained. The term *respondents* will be used when referring to persons who responded to the questionnaires-- otherwise, it will be opportunely quoted. The term *youth* is to be used in a generational sense many times. In those cases, only some recurrent present characteristics are to be considered, for it is clear that a generalization which hides idiosyncrasies would be impossible and imprudent.

The human factor involves constant and universal human features, both biological and psychological, of the human species: for instance, the necessity of satiating thirst or the presence of unconscious psychic anxieties. It is *constant.*

The historical factor involves the forms that human phenomena develop in a certain time or place plus the social changes. An example relates to the different ways in which the idea of "youth" has been considered throughout history (a 30 years-old person is young today; this was hardly so in periods of the Middle Ages, when life expectancy was 35 years). It is *variable.*

On the questionnaires

Twenty-six young people from the five LWF member churches of the Southern Cone had filled out the questionnaires considered here. These questionnaires had been sent to the region through the LWF YICAS youth liaisons and the presidents/bishops, also requesting from the churches information about already existing material on these subjects. Although there was no information regarding materials, further discussions offered by young people deeply enriched perspectives on these subjects. Following are details about these young people by church and age:

	IECLB	ILCH	IELCH	IERP	IELU	Totals
Teenagers	4	0	0	2	5	**11**
Young Adults	5	2	1	3	4	**15**
Totals	9	2	1	5	9	

Total number of respondents who responded to the questionnaire: 26
Total by church: IECLB (9), ILCH (2), IELCH (1), IERP (5), and IELU (9).
Total by age: Teenagers (11), Young Adults (15)

Since the number of questionnaires is limited (26 of 50 that had been requested), we must be extremely prudent about the data obtained, or possible generalizations based on them. Resulting information is to be rather descriptive. The respondents live mostly in urban areas. Many of these young people are active youth leaders in their churches (several of them are known by this author). Thus it is more difficult to have information about "young people in general".

Specific methodology for the questionnaires

In order to understand and to analyze the questionnaires, whose intention is to collect information, two aspects are distinguished. (1) A *discrete factor* which considers all the answers from different respondents given for a specific question; and (2) a *holistic factor* which permits

the relating of elements which are similar or in opposition among responses to different questions, whether within a specific subject or among all the questionnaires. Thus, some questions (keys to understanding each axis) are taken under the discrete factor. All the responses to the questions are to be considered under the holistic factor, enriching the information beyond the isolated questions and finding points of recurrence and divergence. Similar answers or data included in the same or different questions are called *recurrences*. On the other hand, *divergences* reveal apparent distances or differences among data or answers. The questions are to be classified, depending on the form in which they were formulated, in four different types, following several of the criteria and classifications proposed by the projective psychological techniques [2]:

- *Highly structured questions (HS):* The reader is to choose among options. Examples of these are the quantitative questions, for instance: *"How active are you in the activities of your church (select only one option-number)?"*. The intention of these questions is decidedly quantitative and they may be easily measurable. The answers are predetermined (selecting the option that marks the choice) and they are unequivocal.

- *Moderately structured questions (MS):* Qualitative information that could be measurable, depending on the case. *"What are the youth responsibilities in the decision-making stages of your church?"* is a clear example of this type. They are intermediate between the questions of high structuring and the questions of low structuring. The questions contain some *stimuli conditioners*, which are not necessarily unequivocal.

- *Questions of low structuring (LS):* In these open questions, with little stimulus conditioner, the reader is to respond with a greater frame of understanding. He or she is the one who must assign a sense to the question or term involved. There is minimal or no previous option. This information is hardly measurable in the form in which it appears. For instance, *"How would you describe your faith experience?"*. These questions seek to promote a space where the reader contributes greater personal subjective content, encouraging him/her to express his/her point of view. At the same time, these questions research representations and ideas.

- *Mixed type questions (MT):* These questions, of a qualitatively different status to the three previous types, involve intermingled categories from different levels, which might suggest some ambiguity. The aim of these questions is very similar to the aim of the questions of low structuring. They also contain some stimuli conditioners, as also happens in the case of the moderately structured questions, although they could be seen at first as discordant, such as: *"According to your point of view, are church and society actually integrated or separated? Why?"*. Two large groupings of answers arise from these questions: (a) assuming the premises of the question as valid, so as to argue in favor of the answers; (b) rejecting some or several premises of the question so as to propose others.

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[2] The *Cuestionario Desiderativo* and the *Test de Relaciones Objetales (Phillipson)* are technical on the basis of which this criterion was organized. See Frank de Verthely: *Actualizaciones en el test de Phillipson* y Celener de Nijamkin & Braude: *El cuestionario desiderativo*. The projective psychological techniques investigate personality, although our intention here is not to do that.

II. Who are the Lutherans of the Southern Cone?

Some previous information, figures and highly structured questions

Let us start by considering some quantitative data. These are the results from the only two highly structured questions of the questionnaire, which are easily measurable numerically.

How active are you in tasks organized within your church? (Values from 1 to 10) [HS]
Total (average): 6.72. By age: teenagers: 5.27; young adults: 7.86
(See details in panel under the category *Church T.*)

How active are you in organized groups of young people from your church? (Values from 1 to 10) [HS]
Totals (average): 7.72. By age: teenagers: 6.81; young adults: 8.43
(See details in panel under the category *Groups*)

25 answers were received for each one of these two questions.

By Church	ILCH*	IELCH*	IERP	IELU	IECLB
Church T.	7,5*	10,0*	5,60	6,89	6,62
Groups	9,0*	10,0*	7,80	7,55	7,25

(*) The data about the churches in Chile -ILCH and IELCH- must be taken in a relative manner. Two and one questionnaire/s were received respectively from each church, which is very limited, not only as the representative sample, in order to draw conclusions, but as numeric data.

By Age	Teenagers	Young Adults
Church T.	5.28	7.86
Groups	6.81	8.43

| TOTALES	
Church T.	**6.72**
Groups	**7.72**

As may be observed, the declared participation of these young people as much in tasks and events of the local church (6.72 / 10) as in groups (7.72 / 10) is quite active and even simultaneous. Nevertheless, the participation in youth groups seems to show a slight preference (exactly one point of difference) compared to the events of the church as a whole, especially among teenagers. Since the writer of this survey knows many of them, it is possible to add that these data seem quite honest and reliable. This information also reinforces the hypothesis that mainly "youth leaders" or young people who participate actively in the church answered questionnaires. Let us take a look at the quantitative membership of these churches. As may be seen in the official figures, these are more or less stable, or with a certain decreasing movement.
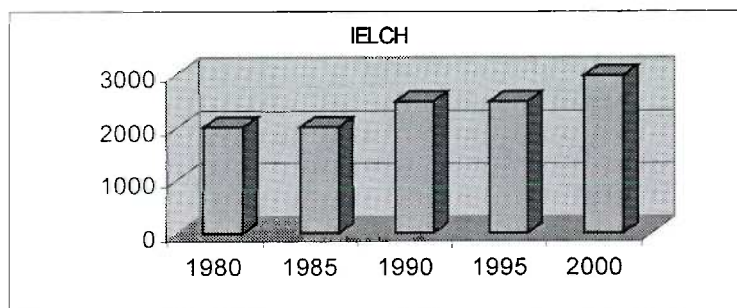
Membership Quantitative Evolution 1980 - 2000

Lutheran Church in Chile

Year	1980	1985*	1990	1995	2000
Membership ILCH	12000	12000	12000	12000	12000

ILCH
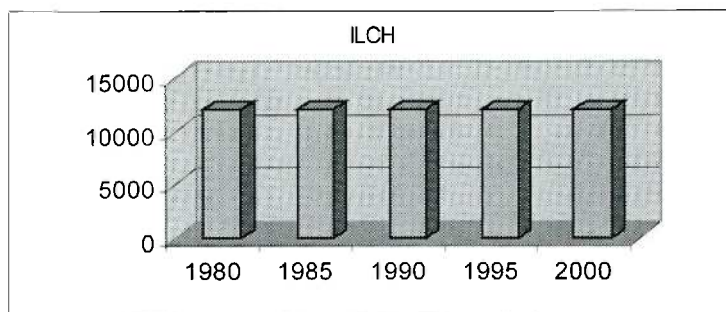
Evangelical Lutheran Church in Chile

Year	1980	1985*	1990	1995	2000
Membership IELCH	2000	2000	2500	2500	3000

IELCH

Evangelical Church of the Lutheran Confession in Brazil

Year	1980	1985	1990	1995	2000
Membership IECLB	800000	850000	850000	1000000	714000

IECLB
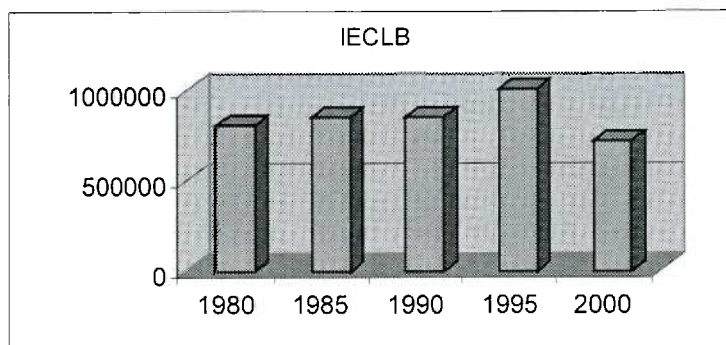
Evangelical Church of the River Plate (Argentina, Uruguay, Paraguay)

Year	1980	1985	1990*	1995	2000
Membership IERP	60000	47000	47000	47000	47000
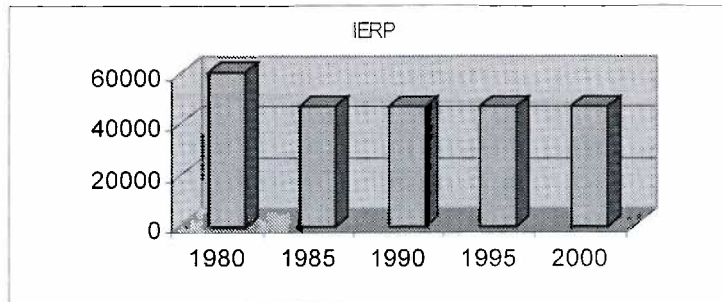
United Evangelical Lutheran Church (Argentina, Uruguay)

Year	1980*	1985	1990	1995	2000
Membership IELU	6430	7653	7653	7000	7000
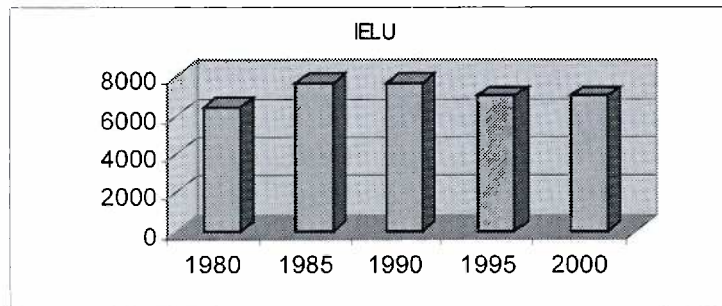
General Membership – Southern Cone 2001**

	ILCH	IELCH	IERP	IELU	IECLB**
Year 2001	12000	3000	47000	7000	714000
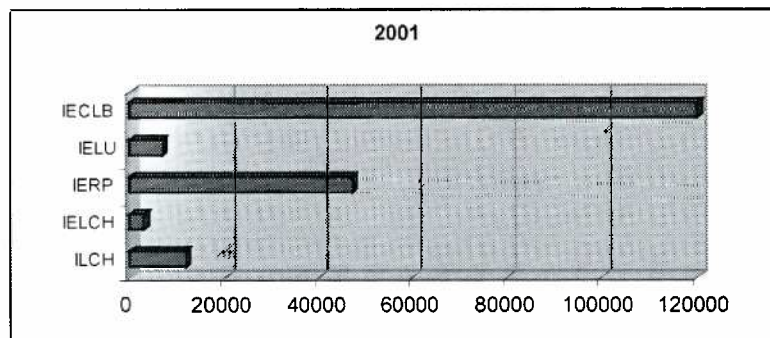
Source: Lutheran World Information, 1980, 1984, 1990, 1995, and 2000.
Notes: Only figures from 1984 were available for these churches in 1985.
Figures for 2000 and for 2001 are the same for the five churches.
(*) Figures available in that year, usually from previous years.
(**) 2001 figures for IECLB are shortened in last graphic.

III. Youth of Faith... and Faith in the Youth

Discussion from the analysis of Questions of Low Structuring
About the subject *Faith* in questionnaires

More ample information about the churches and the respondents could be noticed. Now the analysis of qualitative data is to begin, with the discussion of some questions of low structuring, which were predominant in the first part of questionnaires.

What is 'spirituality' for you? [LS]

This open question of low structuring, which is addressed to the reader as an individual, summons subjective personal answers from the reader. The question seeks the ways in which the respondents understand "spirituality", rather than trying to arrive at a final definition. Twenty-five young people responded in diverse ways. Let us do a brief review of those answers, which are summarized here:

- It is to extend: to think, to feel and to build with respect to what the faith implies.
- It is the attempt to have a personal relation with the divine: Jehovah, king of the armies.
- It means to think in an open way, with the heart.
- It is vigor, a force that we have inside to believe more in Jesus and to love others.
- It implies that the Holy Spirit is with me and is the force to face our life.
- It is to feel that God is close, that my relationship with him is fine.
- It is the way in which God transmits to us by the Holy Spirit.
- It is the nexus among the people in order to make God's will come true.
- It is an assembly of things that we must have: faith, values to use and to be a better person.
- It implies being a person who is loved and protected by God.
- It means talking with God in prayer, and acting according to my principles.
- That is my religious side. It is my barren being, who helps me to think about my actions.
- It implies a vertical relationship with God (thoughts, actions) and a horizontal one with my peers.
- It is the relation everyone has with the divine, arriving at a communication with God.
- It is to feel the presence of God.
- It implies living a life according to the Gospel, in perfect harmony.
- It implies believing and living according to the rules of love in Jesus Christ.
- Exercise of faith.
- It is to live love for one's neighbor, from baptism, with commitment.
- It has a strong sense: we share with others and we struggle for more dignity and equality.
- It is related to the spirit and leaves materialistic thought aside.
- It means that I coexist with God.
- Part of a person is connected to my core.
- Communion with Christ, living according to his will.

As it is well-known, many declared ways of living and understanding faith coexist not only within in a same community or human group, but within a person as well. Sharing these various experiences and ideas usually result in a rich group exchange, which are evident when people from a different community provenience interact fluently. This may have been the experience of many during ecumenical meetings or national/regional encounters. And that was also the experience of several young people attending 1998 Latin American Lutheran Consultation in

Rodeio 12, Brazil. The variety of notions, ideas and 'testimonies' was quite evident. Many ideas about spirituality appeared to be ambivalent in times where exchange and discussions were engaged. Thus, the birth of a network exchange that should pursue a vision involving the common denominators was promoted

Noting now the answers listed before, some data, recurrences and divergences are significant and deserve to be taken into account. Some of them are even similar to those exposed in Rodeio 12. Firstly, several young people point out normative aspects in their answers on what spirituality is about: prescriptive guidelines for conduct, rules to obey, ideal behavior or models. That is to say, aspects that mark moral norms are involved in the ways of understanding and/or living spirituality. It relates to what in Psychoanalysis is called *Superego*, a vigilant component (in the human psychic apparatus) which prescribes limitations, prohibitions, norms and ideals that control our internal tendencies to seek immediate satisfaction, warning of the dangers of reality, and culturally imposed limitations and sanctions.

It is not strange that a strong influence of this nature is also exerted by Christianity. Nevertheless, it does seem significant that it appears within the framework of the understanding of spirituality. And it speaks not only of the personal features of the persons interviewed, but also of the guidelines highly valued by the communities to which they are related. These guidelines are internalized as personal ones as well. Furthermore, this diverges a little from the idea of the loving God, which is also present in several answers.

On the one hand, then, a divergence, including the existence of representations as much of a God whom people are to obey as those of a God of love, may be appreciated. This point will be continued later on. On the other hand, the declaration of the necessity of a relationship or communication with God is recurrent. This datum also appeared, in responses from respondents from the five churches, in other questions of low structuring *("What or who is God for you?" [LS]* and *"How would you describe your experience of faith?" [LS])*. Often this relationship is indicated as personal and towards something divine or nonmaterial. Perhaps this has to do with the increased individualism, acute in the present Market economy. Or also with the solitude and the sensation of emptiness that is often attributed to "postmodern" times. All of this combines with the necessity of deep meaningful relationships and the relevance of personal communication with God, which some people mark as a feature of what is denominated Generation X[3]. Let us see what happens with another question of low structuring:

How do you express faith? [LS]

Twenty-six questions (that is to say, all) received responses.

- Singing, working, praying, worshiping and working by what is right.
- Trying to imitate some lessons of the Lord and helping my brothers and sisters.
- By means of aid or charity.
- Attempting to treat others the way I like them to treat me, in my daily life.
- Explaining to others, in the daily life, that God works through us.
- Trying to fulfill the commandments that God gave us, through love.
- Helping the neighbor, speaking to him/her about God and listening to him/her by means of prayer.

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[3] According to some authors, generation X ("without name") involves people born between 1965 and 1985, although finally it is related to realism and skepticism attitudes rather than to a matter of age. This point of view about the generations, nevertheless, is conceived from realities in the United States, thus its application to other contexts varies and is more relative. Cox., K: *Gene X and God* pp. 15, 54-57.

- Praying both individually and collectively. Being concerned about others.
- The faith is the belief in God and goes hand-in-hand with hope, which is demonstrated in action.
- In my actions with others.
- Sharing the faith with others.
- Feeling myself as a part of the project that God has towards me.
- We must act the faith more than saying it, living according to the lessons of Jesus Christ
- I express my faith in every of my thoughts and actions
- In love. Believing in the non-visible, too. The Creed is a good summary of faith
- By means of actions, for which I also need my self-esteem
- In my actions
- I am certain that faith exists because I am able to feel what the senses do not perceive
- In different forms day by day, with small actions, actions and thoughts in favor of others
- Through communion with other Christians
- Planting the hope that God may transform our lives and our world
- I attempt it by words, through Biblical studies with young people and children
- Through the certainty that God will help us always, although God dislikes our actions
- Praying and going to the church [worshiping]
- I attempt it through right words, and when it is possible also by actions
- Through my work with children within the church. Offering witness

The divergence or the existence of ambivalent representations of a God of love and a God whom we are to obey (patriarchal figure, present in several other questions as well) takes on significance here. Concerns related to bringing aid, especially to "others", are recurrent. The latter would seem to show the high sensitivity of the respondents towards the situation of their neighbors--in direct relationship towards that which surrounds them, the human context.

The way in which faith is expressed is as pertinent as its content: in both, the spirituality of the individuals and the expressions of community are involved. One of the strongest recurring comments concerns ambivalent ideas about God (a father, soldier and judge whom to fear; and a kind father/mother whom to love). The forms, which include prayer, aid and worship, are preferably practiced through the community; nevertheless, the recurrence of the necessity of a personal relationship with God also is remarkable.

In addition, a concern about expressing faith by means of actions, which usually relates to aid, is recurrent. Nevertheless, this aid often concentrates on assistance or charity rather than on the capacity for transformation (mentioned in only one case). Actions, as concrete material manifestations, are in contrast (divergence) to more immaterial aspects. It is necessary also to emphasize the presence of well-known forms of faith expression: to pray, to share, to 'believe in God', to congregate and to worship; their content involves testimonies, "the right word", hope or good deeds towards the neighbor.

An approach to collective phenomena

Most of the respondents, in one way or another, affirmed also that they value their spiritual aspect highly, and that they are very spiritual (answers to *"How do you value your faith?"* and *"religion" [MS]* and *"How spiritual do you think you are?" [MT]*). The Brazilian young people, nevertheless, were somewhat more doubtful on the latter point. The manifestations of faith, especially when they happen in the context of a community, also involve phenomena common to all human groups. This is true even if the community is not physically present, but through representations --loaded with affection and a sense of belonging on the part of the people who

integrate it. These "group" phenomena have been objects of investigation for several decades in psychology.

The behavior of any group, according to the psychoanalyst Bion, happens on at least two levels. **(a) Working group:** this is the rational and conscious level, where a group assumes a common task and **(b) Basic assumptions group:** unconscious level that involves common emotions, whose circulation among its members is essential to obtain a conscious cooperation[4]. On the conscientious level, what is called *secondary psychic process* predominates: rational and cognitive capacities of the subject (like memory, systematic thought, and coherent speech). At the unconscious level a *primary psychic process* predominates, which involves deep anxieties and ambivalent emotions (this process acts, for example, in dreams, when we find them without rational sense, intense, confusing and with superimposed figures).

The subjects, when grouping themselves, are combined in instantaneous and involuntary ways to act according to certain affective states that Bion called *basic assumptions*. These have an archaic origin in the human psyche. The unconscious and the irrational characterize them. They tend to avoid the frustrations and sorrows of contact with reality. When a group is under the basic assumption of *dependency*, its people gather hoping that somebody (not necessarily existent), whom the group highly values, will offer satisfaction for all the necessities and wishes of the group. This is the belief in a protective deity that provides unquestionable security, wisdom and goodness. The basic assumption of *fight-flight* involves the group certainty that there is an outer threatening enemy to the group, who/that must be destroyed (to attack it) or avoided (to escape from it). Finally, during the operation of the basic assumption of *pairing (mating)* the group members produce an unconscious and collective belief by means of which a being not yet born or a future event will solve their problems. A "messianic hope" is constituted therefore, being predominant in this emotional state the idea of future more than resolution in the present[5].

These basic assumptions, common at some moment to every group or community, constitute group reactions as a defense against anxieties of disintegration in the group-individual dilemma. Such assumptions are a result of the regression that all people experience sometime within a group[6]. *Regression* implies predominance of psychical vital phenomena related to the earliest times in the life of each subject, with hegemony of the primary process. The anxiety and desperation of somebody who is lost in an unknown city, for example a professional adult who is used to making huge daily decisions within a framework of security, illustrates this human regressive attitude when losing familiar parameters. A *group* is, from this point of view, an aggregate of individuals in a similar regressive state[7].

Some of these regressive phenomena, of great affective load and booster of group cohesion are also experienced in many of the faith expressions, especially within the scope of the responses to the questionnaire where the experiences in community or towards others are highly valued: to pray, to work, to act, to share and to worship.

The basic assumption of dependency is important to this vital subject. The figure of an almighty, complete God, source of love and protection --who momentarily covers the lack and necessities of the subject-- is also involved in this idea. This figure of God was widely used in many of the

[4] Bion, W.: *Experiencias en grupos,* cap. III.

[5] Fernandez, A.M.: *El campo grupal – Notas para una genealogía,* p. 102-103.

[6] Grinsberg, L. et al: *Introducción a las ideas de Bion.*

[7] Bion, *Op. Cit.*

answers within the subject "Faith". Besides the regressive aspects of the basic assumptions, during many of those faith expressions the young people (as other people) experience many feelings. These feelings involve an increased sensitivity, a necessity to share their anguishes alleviating the tension that having them locked up implies, plus a necessity to be accompanied and to accompany (this double facet also appeared in many of the answers on "Faith").

The more proactive expressions of faith, like "helping those in need" (answers to the questions *"When do you think you express faith?"* [LS] and *"Does your faith drive you to do something? What?"* [MT]) are fundamental in order to maintain a community also at the level of working group, rather than fixed on the basic assumption of dependency group. Nevertheless, this level cannot be underestimated either, since the great majority of respondents affirmed that they resort to God in difficult times, both in individual or community forms. This is an idea closer to the notion of "refuge" when face with the threats of the present daily life rather than to proactive works.

One of the representations that appeared in the questionnaires, the one about "Jehovah, king of the armies", is followed by another affirming that "God is love" in a later answer within the same questionnaire. The discussion on whether that is theologically viable or not, is to be left to the theologians. On our part, we will pay attention to the ambivalent figure of the loving father on one hand, and the king-soldier or judge on the other (figures also mentioned in the answers to the question *"What or who is God for you?"* [LS]). Spiritual diversity of forms and necessities coexist not only in the same community, but also even in the same person (likewise, two group basic assumptions, like those of dependency and fight-flight, may coexist in one group at the same time). So, the 'mighty fortress' and the God king-soldier merge with the kind God, source of love, not from conscious rationality, but from a deeper affectivity and unconsciousness, where these "contradictions" may coexist without conflict.

A proper tension between both working group and basic assumption group levels is indispensable to maintain human groups. That facilitates the unconscious emotional circulation (level of basic assumption group) and simultaneously maintains tasks (level of working group). For it is vital to consider the importance of both levels. This also becomes a key, in case it is really intended to respect and to strengthen the faith of the young people.

Faith in the youth?

However, these features are not exclusive only to groups and communities at a certain moment (in this case, the present), but they also unfold throughout time, even from generation to generation. Two typical expressions about "the young people", both oriented towards the future, are very common, at least in the societies of the Southern Cone:

● *"The young people are the hope for the future and the promise for a better world."* This expression lays in *the faith* from which the following generations come to alleviate and to solve all the problems, frustrations, projects and ideals that the previous generations tried to carry on or left incomplete. This expression, which has been present for most generations, takes different forms according to the place and the historical moment. At the present time, this yearning is based on the hypothesis that youth of today have learned to be tired of wars, prejudices and injustices, and therefore they will construct a future, still imperfect, but more

just[8]. This projection (to attribute one's generation own features to others) is founded on a figure that has been called *His majesty the baby*[9] (on a son or a daughter, for example), which alludes to all unfulfilled ideals (dreams, expectations) from his parents that he would have to make come true.

- *"Youth is lost."* According to this popularly known perspective, young people stand as prisoners of their impulses, turning to addictions, immorality and lack of respect towards elder generations. They do not have perspectives and they are attracted by banal ideologies. This expression is contemporary in the Southern Cone, and therefore historical. It is based on what some social researchers have called "end-of-[twentieth]-century pessimism". This is an "apocalyptic" tragic vision in the midst of the abrupt changes of perspective and expectations among different generations of the same century.

These two virtually opposite facets are, nevertheless, two faces of the same coin. They both express the basic assumption of pairing, a representation that sees the young people not so much in the present, but as a future messianic definition, either as "salvation" or as an inevitable tragic destiny. This basic assumption in societies involves *a fantasy* (psychological belief of messianic feature) and *a projection* (expected role). These phenomena constitute, consequently, a mandate about what the young people shall do or should do, and this mandate is molded by previous generations with a different perspective. This situation develops in an intergenerational conflict. Such a mandate may contain the premises for making itself come true. This particular class of faith in the youth also invites them often to embody the mandate, to fulfill it. When this happens, the young people fit into the assigned structures, fulfilling the "prophecy" that was attributed to them. Is it the heir who takes the inheritance or is it the inheritance that seizes the heir? And now we get the fulfilled mandate: when *His Majesty the Baby* fulfills the goals that were assigned to him, he becomes at the same time a *Lack Own Will Baby*[10], with an inevitable paradox. The generational issue will be amplified in the following chapter.

These two faces of the messianic fantasy for the society can also apply to the churches. And "any coincidence is not pure coincidence". The first face of the fantasy (positive) has been very famous for centuries, while the second (negative) is getting stronger in contemporary times. This is not a matter of the empirical (factual) truth of the affirmations (that would be to guess the future), but about the effectiveness of the representations of an instituted social imagery that prescribes certain roles.

Nevertheless, this fantasy is human. The obstacles or dilemmas that it raises, especially because it constitutes a way of faith as well, may be overcome not by avoiding these phenomena (that would be simultaneously impossible and negligent). They are to be approached through understanding and consciousness, with the goal of putting on the table what we hide between our knees.

As we have appreciated, faith expressions, in their forms and all that these may involve, include what happens "one hour every Sunday", but also much more. They are not only directly involved in many aspects of our daily lives and history, but even at moments of solitude, when the experiences of sharing in a community (or perhaps only by living in society) have their effects.

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[8] Cox, K.: *Gen X and God*, p. 55, 108-109. To be tired of prejudices and injustices is a feature of Generation X.

[9] English term (expression) used in psychoanalysis to illustrate the assignment of parents' ideals and expectations to their son/daughter.

[10] This second expression is mine.

IV. The King and the Baton

Analysis and Discussion of moderately structured questions
On the subject of *Church* in the questionnaires

The issue about generations has only been touched briefly in the last chapter. Now, let us take into consideration certain data, which lead us to other features and perspectives of this phenomenon. One of the purposes of the questionnaire is to gather young people's expressions on how they see themselves or how they feel with respect to decisions that include them. One might get the impression, on the basis of some data, that in fact this influence has little impact. At any rate, the expressions of the young people summarized in the answers are what the questionnaires are able to show in a trustworthier manner.

The subjective declarations --what the young people say in the questionnaires-- have as much value as the material facts, since they speak of their feelings of belonging as much to the churches --sharing the communion table-- as to the decisions that are made in the name of these churches.

What are the responsibilities of the youth at the decision-making levels of your church? *[MS]*

Twenty-one answers of those who responded are summarized here (of the remaining 5, 3 did not have an opinion or did not understand, while 2 gave no answer):

IERP	Collecting fees and payments at church schools. Painting gates. Assisting women.
	I have no say which may change anything in the church.
	To present/display concerns and challenges of young people as a group.
	To achieve youth's sense of being included. To bring awareness with regard to the context.
	To coordinate groups and to accompany them.

IELU	Youth integration. Organization of the groups.
	We decide only on youth issues.
	They are never left aside.
	Nothing other than on youth themes.
	Participation in worship.

IECLB	Several, according to the activity.
	The influence or the place in the decisions is almost insignificant.
	Very few.
	Few. The Department of Youth seeks the voices of youth to be raised for decision-making.
	They have certain responsibilities, thus people should listen to them more.
	The Council makes the important decisions. The young people express opinions.
	Almost none.
	Only about some events within our church.
	The young people have responsibilities, but they exert little influence in the decisions.

ILCH	To represent the youth.

Hence, in the Southern Cone churches we may observe that many young people usually do not feel a part of most of the church decisions, a phenomenon which is very similar among most of the persons who responded to the questionnaires in all the churches. This is clear in at least 12 of them. It may also be possible to observe that many answers about this issue converge, affirming that youth have responsibilities mainly within their own youth groups: meaning that responsibility is centered in their own base groups. This clearly appears in at least 8 of them. Only 3 churches included in their answers factors tied to other areas of church ministry, which are not specific to "youth". It is necessary to remember also that 5 respondents had no opinion or did not answer the question. Both age groups (teenagers and young adults) answered in similar ways, without any meaningful differentiation according to the age criterion that has been used.

Let us go beyond the dialectic of whether this happens because the young people want it this way or because it is what they are able to do; whether they are capable, mature enough or not; or whether they are more active or passive. These data show that even having a very active role in their churches (let us remember that most of them are very active or "youth leaders") these young people do not feel a part of the decisions on the directions taken by the churches--would these be new directions?

When networking in the Southern Cone started in 1998, many basic challenges were to be challenged before focusing in a common thematic concern or narrowing an issue. One of them – likely to be the major– related to each local church as institution: how to engage national youth work, representation and impact in every church. Thus, some young people coming form different churches began to share events in an exchange process. Only later on the network would have built specific ground to engage the regional thematic work. In other words, how to start to make young voices being heard in many churches' decision-making-spheres were 'youth' is only a word naming the past of those people who discuss decisions.

Despite this situation of lack youth impact on church decisions, we suggest not reducing the information given by these young people regarding the phenomena of the local church as an institution/organization, since many of their frustrations and disenchantments can also be tied to other contextual factors, i.e. the loss of a progressive perspective and an increasing distrust in institutions in general.

An anthropological genealogy

Aiming at a deeper approach on the issue of "youth participation", we shall bring some elements (historical, and even prehistoric) that may help to understand the scope of the new challenges. Certain "evolutionary" stages, when seen from the anthropological point of view, may refer to the idea of a genealogy[11]; of what has been called *gerontocracy* (old people's government), which we shall discuss later. These different forms continue nowadays to be observed in several of the

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[11] The term genealogy is used to designate something quite different to *the origin* (the unique beginning of a linear history). It rather involves as much the accidents and failures of appreciation about the beginnings (the "precedence": Herkunft, in German) as the confrontations between forces that face one another (the "emergency": Entstehung in German) instead of a unique linear history. See Foucault, M.: *Microfísica del poder*, cap. I, and *Nietszche, la genealogía, la historia*, mentioned in Veira Sand, L: *Huellas, travestis, economicismos... ¿De qué Historia me está hablando?* (Post-degree thesis, Facultad of Psicología, University of Buenos Aires, 2000), pp. 2, 15.

so-called "primitive cultures", whose distinction has not always been taken into consideration in traditional anthropology. It is necessary to emphasize that progress of the following evolutionary stages is not linear, and they are often superimposed with the intention of demonstrating a construction of generational differences and the future historical challenges that may occur.

For its subsistence and perpetuation, any social group needs at least (a) the production of means of subsistence (*production*) and (b) the reproduction of the humans themselves, the propagation of the species (*reproduction*).

The most primitive form of human organization is called *horde* subsisting on hunting and fishing; that is to say, the land being used as a labor tool: animals and fishes for immediate consumption are obtained directly from the land[12]. Due to immediate consumption, the food activity production is repeated daily. The human relationships in these "groups" are called adhesion relationships: humans relate to each other only during the short time of daily production (hunting) and these groups change constantly (free and voluntary mobility of the adults). Consequently, human relationships are short and ephemeral. Bonds of kinship among their members do not yet take place.

Later, some land investment takes place, now as a labor means, through *the agriculture of shoots*, tubers (like potatoes) which do not need seeds. Some activities of hunting and fishing may still remain during the unproductive seasons. This mode of production requires certain continuity, thus offering sedentary characteristics. There are no longer relationships of adhesion, but relationships of marriage. This agriculture is very primitive, and there is no accumulation of what has been produced. Sedentarity and the low number of people necessary to maintain the production in this type of small agricultural community, promote a shortage of women who are necessary for reproduction[13]. This shortage favors war and kidnapping (in the most violent cases) or negotiation (in the most peaceful cases) as typical ways to integrate new fertile women into the group, which is more stable.

Unlike both previous types, *the domestic community* (present since Neolithic times in human evolution: around 10,000 years ago) bases its subsistence on the economy of cereal-production: this means the accumulation of grains and seeds in sufficient quantity for the maintenance and reproduction of its members as well as for the agricultural cycle to be repeated[14]. This mode of production, which uses the land as a labor means, is sedentary and creates permanent relationships among its members. It requires a management power since much of the food supply (on fixed term with no-immediacy, by means of sowing, harvesting and accumulation of the seeds) as well as the distribution of the accumulated production is deferred (from generation to generation). Power and social hierarchy are based on the position occupied within the productive history of the community. Therefore power is retained by the first producers, those who maintained the community by means of their work in the past, and who do not owe anything to anybody--only to their lost ancestors. On the contrary, the productive generation (the one in the middle, involving the youth and adults), as well as the youngest ones, owe to the previous

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[12] Meillassoux, C.: *Mujeres, graneros y capitales*, pp. 7 and 29-32.

[13] The reproductive capacity of a community lies on women, since they not only carry the baby in their uterus, but their fertility is limited by the periods of pregnancy available. Unlike men, whose number is not important in reproduction as long as it is not null: a single man has the capacity to turn pregnant many women. Women also are destined to the more ungrateful works, being the first to be exploited. See ibid., p. 46 and 49-53.

[14] Ibid., p. 56, 65. Other authors also discussed the question about the domestic community and its production. See Sahlins, M: *Stone-age economics* (published in Spanish under the title *Economía de la edad de piedra)*, Aldine-Atherton, Chicago.

generation. The elders are the ones who exert the civil and administrative power in these communities, and their authority results from their previous position in the productive cycle. Given the fact that the reproductive capacity inside each reproductive cell is limited, exogamy, the exchange (outside the group) of fertile people is necessary to allow reproduction. The authority of the elderly is then based on (a) the management of the accumulated production, seeds --subsistence-- as well as on (b) the decisions to be made on the circulation of fertile women which is required by exogamy needs, that is to say on the community's reproductive capacity --"on the spouses". The reproductive cell is the family, a place in which respect is given to the elderly and the cult of fertility, among others[15]. This basic cycle in the domestic life of the community requires, as may be seen, at least three generations, the first generation being the elder who exerts the management and administration power. The generation in the middle -- adults and productive youths-- are the ones who provide food with their work to the remaining ones. The last generation is fed by the productive generation, and the youngest generation will have to repay as much with its work as with its obedience when arriving at the adult age.

This form of government and authority which has been called gerontocracy --or also the "government of the less sexually equipped"-- thus becomes a political principle whose roots are economic. It is seen as having taken place during long periods of humanity, though not in all. It is an historical principle of respect to the authority rather than a natural and universal law.

The forms of the domestic community, including gerontocracy, prevailed during many centuries. However, its later contact with modern forms, i.e. the bourgeois mode of production (so called capitalism as well) altered it deeply. In its historical process, many institutions of the traditional domestic community have been altered, surpassed or supplanted by those who are named as the "bourgeois mentality"[16]. This mentality developed during the last centuries and our "western" societies suffered changes at a greater speed during the last years. Especially since the fall of the Berlin Wall and of the Soviet Bloc some time ago, thus facilitating the concrete reactivation of the principle of a world-wide single Market.

This whole process gradually influenced and modified the idea and the representation of "youth" even in the Southern Cone, as much in its *effective role* (what young people do in fact nowadays) as in its *ideal role* (what is wished that they do or attain). Beyond the discussion of whether these changes have a similar qualitative magnitude or not (we leave this discussion to historians, philosophers and others), the dialectic tension of such differences may stir up a more comprehensive understanding.

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[15] Ibid., p. 74.

[16] Jose Luis Romero, Argentine historian, uses this term to designate an assembly of values and representations that began to develop with the influence of small retailers during late feudal time. This 'new' mentality soon marked the decay of that feudal mode. Let us consider some crucial examples in the historical process of consolidation of this mentality. In its dawn, i.e. the eleventh century, the ascent of the French knights to titles that were only reserved to the highest aristocracy, and the later "discovery" of values such as certain norms of *courtesy*, the *cleverness* and the *femininity*. Afterwards, the crisis of the fourteenth century establishes new land property relations in Europe thus rejecting those traditional forms that had maintained servants tied to their feudal lords. During the sixteenth century, while the massive European arrival to America and the circumvolution of Africa, a whole *global* or *unique* market was first established. As the historian Kriedte stresses out, this phenomena is illustrated by the traffic of slaves from Africa to work in the cotton plantations in America. Thus, this may become the beginning of which has been called *Globalization*. Finally, the eighteenth century experiences the modern industrial revolution arrival led by bourgeois revolutions, like the French Revolution , which granted a solid legal frame and a philosophical base to the new mentalities. See: Romero, J. L: *Estudio de la mentalidad burguesa* and Kriedte, P.: *Feudalismo tardio y capital mercantil.*

And...What about today?

Gerontocracy uses a very clear principle which has usually been called "the passing of the baton": when an adult generation ages enough to belong to the group of the elders, "it receives" from the previous generation (now disappeared) a set of privileges which then allows this generation to exert the authority. In other terms, the time comes for almost everyone and this turn is established by a position or a generation. This is also called *relief*: when a generation begins to disappear and the following one receives its attributes. Let us take some well-known examples in sports to understand how *relief* works. It is clear in athletic races (i.e. races of 4x100 meters in which one competitor on a team, when finalizing his run, is substituted by passing the baton or slug to the next member of the same team). This is also the principle so typical in the Middle Ages of the prince, the heir who receives the throne from his father or mother only when he or she passes away or abdicates, in a long chain of succession. It is the logic of privileges--and about their scarcity.

Thus, this principle is not only vertical and exclusive, but it is also socially on its way to extinction. The principle of gerontocracy (passing the baton) implies what we may call **a temporal verticality**--that is to say, hierarchic relationships based on the position in the generation cycle, even though relationships of solidarity, friendship and equality within each generational group from the same sex (which are essential in the domestic community) are found. This political principle with economic rationale (as was indicated) may be perpetuated in contemporary times through some traditional organization ways. But nowadays it is openly challenged in our societies, mainly by that system of faith so different from the Christian communion, which is the belief in the goodwill of the Market.

Let us see, for example, some challenges appearing at the present time. Beyond the fact that the following example comes from a North American point of view, many elements may be useful, not only because Latin America is a direct zone of influence, but also because these situations become more and more similar in all big cities today (let us remember: more than half of the persons who responded to the questionnaires come from these cities).

In his famous bestseller *American Psycho* (recently adapted to a movie), Bret Easton Ellis presents in an acute way the forms in which the Market floods subjective life in the present phase of Late Capitalism[17]. Pat Bateman is a young person aged 26 years, graduated from Harvard. He works at a financial company on Wall Street, and makes money faster than he can spend it. He is aesthetically beautiful and trains his body daily in a gym. He embodies the model to which many young people would aspire. Bateman can only think of the surrounding objects on the basis of the label from the place in which they have been bought--and of their exclusive features. In that frame of magna frivolity, everything is leveled according to the way it may be measured (according to price and exclusiveness). Pat Bateman is also a psycho, not because he suffers from a double personality, but by continuity in his daily life: he murders a beggar and some of "his" girls with the same vigor with which he makes money and consumes. To eliminate a marginal one "represents for Bateman a line of continuity with his purchases or the decision to

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[17] Fariña, J.M: *Ética, un horizonte en quiebra,* cap. I and II, Buenos Aires, 1997. The term *Late Capitalism* here is not to designate to the final phase of this system – that would be a historical distortion, which retroactively considers the present as the center and the destination of an historical process which in fact took centuries. The term rather refers to its present stage (the last one which is known) characterized by the height of the economy of services and the production and the consumption not only of material goods, but also of symbolic goods.

go to a discotheque. If all the objects are organized according to the amount of money whereupon they can be bought, then what is not worth anything does not exist [...] Subjects are compared with objects [and being with having]. Therefore, one who does not have anything, is nothing"[18].

Again, we have at least two representations of *the young one* today.
(a) The young person with *the ideal role*, the winner who manages the destiny of a start-up company and is dedicated to accumulating limited goods
(b) The one with the usual *factual role*, the young person who does not have a glimpse of projects or perspectives because his/her entire horizon has been fading.

Here is the paradox of Late Capitalism. Young people leading crucial destinies are "kicking the board" of gerontocracy and of quite a few established and old institutions in stronger and stronger ways, not only by increasing in number, but by the decrease in their age. How many "Bill Gates" will there be? We do not know, but the tendency is surely increasing. That coveted *youth*, that fusion yearned for many centuries between management capacity and sexual potency-beauty, may be called: "Youth, divine treasure". That idea has been accentuated by the eroticism of compulsive consumption of unlimited exclusive goods. But it is impossible to satiate the necessity of scarce limited goods in a repetitive and absurd compulsive consumption[19]. On the other hand, there is a great number of young people who either cannot attain that ideal, or "have fallen off the face of the earth", or at least whose rights have been disregarded, left out of what was at one time mentioned to them as "progress".

The Southern Cone, and especially Latin America, turns out to be a particular place, since it combines so-called *"traditional"* structures with *"modern"* or *"Late Capitalism"* structures. That is to say, pseudo feudal ways, based on gerontocracy, which are predominant in rural and suburban areas, coexist with ways predominant in metropolitan areas, with increasing values similar to those lived by Pat Bateman. In the latter areas, consumption may also become a faith system: belief in the goodness of the limitless market of goods, exchanges and services, materialistic as well as symbolic[20].

The asymmetric relationships between unequal parts hardly become honest relations shared in common without turning into paternalism, both in so-called traditional or modern structures. Presently we see this clearly in the relations between "winners" and "losers" in the economic aspect of the current Globalization[21]. Several examples in the Latin American countries are made especially visible when the governments of neoliberal tendency use traditional populist resources to seduce the oppressed classes in order to get their electoral support, which is needed. Is this paternalism affecting the relationships among different generations when these are asymmetric? There are no indications to the contrary. What is more, paternalism is one of the

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[18] Ibid., Cap I. The translation is mine (original in Spanish).

[19] This compulsion, as much as for the consumption as for accumulation (two faces of a same coin), is absurd and "irrational" as far as there is a need to accumulate in order to be able to accumulate more, thus being able to reinitiate the cycle of accumulation over and over again. It is like a experimental mouse in a laboratory running within a wheel, spinning it around in order to run at a higher speed, more and more. Wallerstein, I. See: *El capitalismo histórico.*

[20] The height of symbolic goods involves the consumption of stereotypes of beauty, institutional images, sectarian values, and even some "pseudo-religions". For instance, the fluctuating concepts of aesthetic, the allegiance to diverse football clubs around the world, the value granted to an institutional logo or a trade name, and the cure of cores that some "free and healing churches" offer (some people have called them "fast food of the faith").

[21] Bloomquist, K: *Engaging Economic Globalization ace to Communion,* p. 19. LWF Documentation, 2001.

most outstanding heirs of gerontocracy --the logic of owing and respecting the authority. It is in the relations among generations where this paternalism previously developed and of course, shall continue doing so in situations in which gerontocracy is hegemonic.

The eventual isolation of the young people may expose them to more threats, as the overprotection of youth urges them to accentuate a low esteem or to rebel[22]. Both phenomena are effects of the above-mentioned paternalism in the asymmetric relationships among generations, and tend not only to limit the youngest, but also to maintain them with a low-capacity impact. The cycle of relations of gerontocracy is being legitimated and thus reproduced--it thus becomes a vicious circle, which tends to perpetuate itself.

Currently, a system of individualistic faith, based on competition and the exclusion of the greatest number of people in history, is the one questioning these old structures of inequality, asking to carry out great transformations. And where is the "prophetic voice" of the churches? Faced with such ambivalence, it is important to consider not only what it means to be alternative in a certain context --in this case, in the mentioned hegemonic model of today-- but what are the tools? Are these tools included in the alternative dynamic ways to strengthen the communion of churches? Or, on the contrary, do these alternatives involve previous and more obsolete structures of organization, relation and movement, than those of the forms which are being questioned?

If the answer to this last question is affirmative, then there is still a lot to reflect upon and to do. The [new] challenges, alternative in the face of the established hegemonic ways, are not to come only from the creative Christian young people. In order to become a real transforming invitation, these challenges need take into account the old unequal structures that the yet unequal late-capitalism already overcame. Otherwise, the alternatives will involve previous old structures and become unsustainable and "acronos" (out of time).

What challenges the churches, in particular from the Southern Cone, are to face! It is not about impelling a better performance --as another service offered in a competitive environment[23]-- in the increasing market of symbolic goods. On the contrary, it is about going beyond these "official" forms, sharing a table of peers – "the communion". And again, the manifestations of faith are to receive vital importance. It lays upon them also the capacity to incarnate "one more exclusive service" or a legitimate shared table.

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[22] LWF *Report of the General Secretary to the Council* 2001, p. 71, and for Department Mission and Development *Annual Desk Reports 2000,* p. 83 (for Desk the Youth in Church and Society).
[23] Bloomquist, K: *Op. Cit.* p. 11.

V. From the Tower of Babel to Globalization

Discussion from the analysis of Mixed Questions
About the subject *Youth* in questionnaires

In order to obtain a sharper approach to the ways youth relate to the world today (also as a generation in the Southern Cone), some of the mixed type questions that estimate the church/society and church/youth dilemmas are to be considered. Beyond the dilemma of whether it is correctly or incorrectly formulated (we will leave that for a later discussion), since it superimposes categories from different logical levels[24], the stimuli may suggest --in fact this happened in many cases-- various answers. As mixed questions, these ones combine aspects of moderately structured questions (to suggest pairs may be in separation or integration) with aspects of questions of low structuring (to argue about the dilemma and to respond to *"why"*). It is intended to investigate representations and ideas about these relationships, sometimes so controversial. The answers might be developed by argumentation (in the case of accepting the dilemma) or by reaction (in the case of opposition to it).

Indeed, the responses were very controversial. The 26 persons who responded showed a wide range of ideas. On the one hand, taking a global glance at the concise data, the following may be summarized:

According to your point of view,
Are the church and the society actually integrated or separated? [MT]

Integrated	7
Separated	9
Integrated and separated	8
Other answers	2

Why?

A huge discussion opens up here. If the opinions seemed very disperse it is because a third of the young people said that both are integrated, another third said that they are separated, and the other third thinks in both ways simultaneously. The diversity becomes still greater in *"Why?"*:

- Of the people who affirm that there is **integration**, the answers vary from *"because the society is in crisis and in need of the aid of God"* up to *"for the church without society would disappear"*
- Two poles may be distinguished among young people who affirm that **separation** exists. In the first of the cases, they point out negative factors within society: *"The world does not know God"*, whereas in the second with respect to the church: *"the churches, as institutions, have stopped being reliable"*.
- Young people who maintain **both meanings** indicate either intermediate ways of the type *"They are a little integrated and a little separated"* or shared values and purposes between the two are scarce or relative.

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[24] The "society" can be considered as a dynamic wholeness whereas the "youth" can be an age or generation breach within it.

- **Other answers** mentioned related phenomena (sects on the one hand, effects of globalization on the other), but did not make further comments.

Although the age factor did not seem to have an effect on this question, the geographical aspects or those related to the local churches did. While all the answers (7) about integration were located in the churches of Argentina and Uruguay (IELU and IERP), the notion of separation has been spread among all the churches. Furthermore, the opinions of both ways are found in their majority (in 7 of the 8 cases) in the church of Brazil (IECLB). The variety, divergence, opposition and plurality of ideas on these relationships constitute a datum in itself, which is necessary to consider.

Regarding the term **church** (which may bring ambiguity by lack of precision), several persons who answered took it in the sense of *"local church"* while others understood it in its more universal meaning, *"Church"*. This could be expected due to the breadth of the term: as a result there are very many similar interpretations of each one of the meanings. However, it may be emphasized that the same happened with the term **society**. The breadth of the concept varied especially from *"local community"* (in youth from small cities) up to *"the present world"* (more recurrent in young people living in large cities).

Let us go to the other question.

According to your point of view,
Are the church and the young people really integrated or separated? [MT]

Integrated	9
Separated	7
Integrated and separated	9
Other answers	1

Why?

The young respondents mentioned perceiving themselves (in this relationship) with slightly more integration than that between church and society, although these answers also presented/displayed different points of view. The numbers seem to have been reversed (9 *Integrated* and 7 *Separated* in contrast with the 7 *Integrated* and 9 *Separated* in the previous question) and the distribution of answers continues being very equal (in three thirds, approximately).

- Again, the Brazilian youth were the majority (5) among those who perceived the question in a **two-directional meaning** (9), although there was greater distribution among the other churches (1 answer of this type per each one of the other 4 churches).

- Argentine and Uruguayan youth were again the ones who perceived themselves as more **integrated** (6 of the 9 answered in that sense). Among them, some indicated that integration occurs by events (camps, for example), whereas the others preferred to use a point of view about actions (accompaniment, for example).

- Nevertheless, the Argentine young people were most of those who indicated **separation** (in 4 of the 6 answers of this phenomenon), being critical of the "situation".

The existence of opposite or different values appeared in several answers as a clear cause of separation, or precarious integration with separation. The answers in this direction varied from *"many youth are seduced by values different from those of the church, whereas the church has difficulty at the moment to understand the needs of the young people"* up to *" instead of supporting the young people, we place more moral rules and norms upon them [...] to the point of not letting them enter the church, sometimes, if they are 'badly' dressed ".*

Other commentaries about these two questions...

The three Chilean young people pointed to separation or both phenomena, responding to this question as to the previous one, although the diversity of the causes indicated is the same as those above.

The cause relative to values--its diversity (in some cases) or its opposition (in others)--appears in the answers to both questions, and therefore refers to both relationships.

Many of the persons who responded rationalized these mixed questions with "metaquestions" (questions on questions) or replaced the "dilemma". These are the so-called *answers by reaction* which showed up in some of the cases in which integration and separation aspects were simultaneously indicated.

The criticism on separation was reflected not in one, but in both directions: "Enclosed Church, separated from society", and "["secular"] society moved away from the Church and the message of Christ". Something similar happened, in the relationship between the Youth and the Society.

... And answers to other questions

Another distinction has been made (simplified here) with respect to the term *Church*, which may help to avoid ambiguities and vicious discussions:

- Church, as *institution headed by Christ*, universal (catholic) and holy. It is always present since it was born, and its members are called to the universal priesthood.
- Church and churches as *human organization/s,* is an historical social product, institutionalized in concrete communities. It also embodies a set of values.

The tension and distance between both visions bring theologian and social scientist to approach the problem--not necessarily as different people, but as a complementary approach. Since the above questions are mixed type ones, different ways of understanding church may be found within the space of both meanings.

Most of the answers indicating a separation with a negative role of society include a definition of church nearer to our first meaning. Whereas the answers which point out a negative role to the church, include an understanding closer to the second meaning.

Something very similar happened with other questions on the subject *Church*. On the one hand, with the answers to *"What has brought you to your present church? [MS]"* and *"What would bring you to your present church? [MS]"*. Most of those who responded to these questions used a point of view closer to the first meaning. On the other hand, the answers to *"What has kept you*

away from your present church"[MS] and *"What would keep you away from your present church?"[MS]* included approaches nearer to the second meaning. In this case, the indicated causes included conflicts, administrative issues and contradictions between values and practices.

In answers to the questions *"What is your main concern about the present world?"[ME]* from the subject *Youth*, many responses included the issue of globalization and some of the areas which have been influenced by this phenomenon: society, culture and economy (mainly this last one, in the scope of finances). Concerns related to the missionary role of the Church, poverty (present in more than half of the questionnaires) and unemployment were recurrent in a similar way. "We are convinced about the free market [...] a true democracy cannot exist without free market"[25], was recently the affirmation of the Italian representative at the G-8 summit (group of leaders of the "eight most industrialized countries"). After that, other representatives affirmed having made decisions in the direction of what is called the "developing world", which includes Latin American countries. Once again we see how faith returns. Many of the respondents are quite skeptical with respect to the future, whereas those making decisions affecting also the Southern Cone region, say not only that they support the unequal flow of capital, but explicitly confess and promote faith in the Market, very different from what most of the respondents expressed in the questionnaires.

In this respect many answers (especially those of teenagers) were also centered on more private aspects. Along this line, friendship appeared as something with much value and a source of inclusion and satisfaction (answers to questions *What makes you feel more included? [MS]* and *What makes you feel happier in your daily life? [MS]*). The sense of being accepted as a necessity, of being listened to and of being taken seriously was also very recurrent (in the same questions).

The respondents were also very fearful about conflicts, from the most public to the most private spheres (questions *"What makes you feel more frustrated?"[MS]* and *"What is your main concern about life in the church?" [MS]*). Nevertheless, such conflicts were perceived mainly as obstacles--and rarely as challenges. Many indicated, through different answers, that the inconsistency demonstrated "when they say one thing and do another"[26] frustrates, concerns or distances them.

Many young people were also skeptical when responding to the question *"How do you think your faith is related to the concrete world? [LS]"*, indicating that there is no relationship (in some cases), or that faith is seen by means of aid to the neighbor (in other cases). Pursuing values and promoting a message of life were also recurrent answers.

As far as we could detect, many answers expressed quite a pessimistic vision of the present world as well as fear of and distrust in the future, added to the omnipresent value of giving help to the neighbor. Let us try to consider some of the historical and contextual aspects influencing young people beyond the realities of their churches, in which the membership is stable or in slight reduction.

What has been happening in the Southern Cone during the last fifty years?

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[25] The Italian representative made this statement one Sunday. During previous incidents, the police had killed a young anti-globalization demonstrator two days before. Source: BBC News, 22 of July 2001.
[26] Literal answer to one of questionnaires.

The generation factor is to be considered again, but this time in a particular cycle of three generations which interests us most: the current one. Some words have been said about *Generation X* in previous pages, and of its North American conception. We are to see some of the generational realities in the Southern Cone. These are only some recurrent elements, and they do not pretend to erase diversity and idiosyncrasies. The countries integrating this region are relatively rich in resources, but like so many others, they experience low development or wealth. This relative wealth was connected some time ago with the hope of "progress" equivalent to that of the North West.

It is possible then to locate a *first generation* in this cycle of three among those people who lived their youth in the '40s and '50s. The Welfare State was hegemonic in the Western World during that time in which the central governments subsidized the economy and brought benefits to citizens, according to the rights they had attained. The Latin American version of this involved populist policies (and some dictatorships as well), which began to yield benefits to the working classes in order to get their popular support[27]. Therefore the majority of people began to access the benefits of their rights and modern technology was within reach, not only in cities, but in rural areas as well. This generation--our grandparents' one, perhaps--had what may be called *[national] faith in progress*. They saw their conquests and their expectations being raised, with some optimism, though with several limitations. The path was of a certain prosperity accompanied by a sort of hope. They were born with expectations and maintained them throughout their adult lives.

A *second generation* (our parents), a turning point, may be located in the youth from the late '60s and '70s. They were born in a time of relative wellbeing. They learned to fight for transformations and changes. They finally obtained employment. They had increasing hopes in "a better world" but they soon got frustrated, not only by not reaching their specific goals, but also when starting to lose their expectations and some of their benefits. The welfare states entered into crisis because of the high governmental expenses. All Southern Cone countries suffered harsh dictatorships and persecution during this time[28]. This generation became disillusioned halfway along the road, seeing some of their projects being shipwrecked when reaching adulthood.

The *third generation*, most of the young people in the '90s and the present time, was born frustrated, disillusioned. It is skeptically more pessimistic from the start. A very uncertain and fragile future not only discourages many of the people's projects, but also demonstrates the unsustainability of institutions. With the fall of "the sole ideas" and the rise of the hegemony of the private sphere, these institutions suffered a considerable loss of credibility. The Welfare or Populist State practically disappeared. In its place, the Neoliberal State with its "young democracies" reduces all social "expenses" in order to achieve fiscal balance and/or to repay the external debts, and many social conquests and rights have been erased. This generation seems to have been shipwrecked before undertaking the trip. To escape the threats of the social world, a

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[27] Examples of these governments are that of Getulio Vargas in Brazil, who played a decisive influence by almost two decades exerted, and Juan Domingo Perón in Argentina, that marked an important point in Argentine history. The women's vote and the right to remunerated vacations are examples of the profits reached in this last country during that time.

[28] Those dictatorships, which made any alternative voice disappear, took place at similar times in these countries, whereas they also got support and coordination from other more powerful western countries. Brazil experienced its dictatorship from 1964 to 1985, Argentina since 1966 until 1973 and from 1976 to 1983, Chile from 1973 to 1990, Paraguay had a "unique-party democracy" from 1954 to 1989, and Uruguay suffered lack formal democracy from 1973 to 1985.

refuge is usually sought in the individual or private sphere[29]. The way to progress is by means of a [private faith in the] incessant and growing Market, where a price can be put on everything -- objects and subjects[30]. The Berlin Wall fell, all the victories have been obtained by the world that promised progress, but exclusion and distrust have increased.

These young people live in a world where the process of globalization reached a level of development never seen before, with a special focus towards "communications". The English language, together with the new codes of modern technology, has become the universal language[31], turning the allegorical figure of confusing diverse languages from the Tower of Babel into broken glass. But a strong concern can also be observed in the questionnaires about the contents and the depth of "communications" and relationships, confronted by an excessive assault of stimuli giving way to the threat of nonsense and emptiness of meaning. Also, this generation lives in a world in which meanings are imposed (although we speak of the coexistence of discourses), achieving "semantic victories"[32]. This means filling words with a certain sense and using them as much in a positive direction (to generate consensus) as in a negative one (to encourage social condemnation towards something), according to the pursued effect. These meanings do not fall from the sky, but become a product of social power relationships. With the falling of the dictatorship speeches, and a deep distrust towards them, coherence between 'words and action' is extremely valued--as has been pointed out in the questionnaires.

However, although this generation is skeptical, it does not mean that young people lack faith. On the contrary, giving special value to the spiritual aspects and increasing respect to diversity may be noted. This revalorization is also present and very much alive in the questionnaires: need of a [personal] relationship with God, and need of sharing through experiences in community. This community embodies the form of social organization that seems to have become the alternative (especially in the churches of the Southern Cone) to individualistic models which enhance both triumph as well as exclusion. But in order to be a credible alternative, it needs to be not only a community with sayings, but also a community with a mouth, which assumes the consequences of what it says. Moreover, a community with a body, which practices true relationships of equality and transformation.

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[29] This aspect was also recurrent through some studies about European Youth. See Brunstad, P.O.: *Longing for Belonging – The language of the future*, pp. 4-5.

[30] At present, a factor "country risk" factor exists in some South American nations. This index, provided by a private company, measures the distrust of the investors towards a certain country, fluctuating according to the conditions. Thus, not only actions of companies are quoted, but also the some poor countries.

[31] Bloomquist, *Op. Cit.*, p. 10.

[32] The decade of the '90s attended, in the South Cone, to the loss of employed workers' social rights. The conflicting laws, through which those reforms were promoted, appealed to "turn things more flexible". Of course, How many people are going to oppose something that is flexible? Surely not so many. Certain fashionable terms, positively valued, are used in order to facilitate the advance of extremely controvert questions, which may de detrimental for those least protected, in this case. This is also a way to strengthen a consensus more or less "blind". These phenomena had very concrete material effects, and the language influenced on it.

VI. Some Conclusions...

Analysis about human phenomena, social structures and present situations has been developed through this study. Such approaches intend to contribute with LWF member churches--and why not, other people or institutions--to the understanding of the present challenges, from the perspective of a "youth", but not only about themes exclusive to youth. Social and human phenomena do not only facilitate a framework to approach how *faith* is expressed, but they involve it. The same applies to the challenges mentioned, which have to be handled in each social context. These **"new challenges"**, as has been said, are not to come only from youth, although they are the ones embodying them. The answers which refer to obsolete structures (like gerontocracy) imply a fall backwards rather than a true "overcoming" of the obstacles expressed by the challenges. This kind of responses may avoid the roots: sometimes the challenges directly question the structures, which are not only abstractions, but daily practices.

If we are to accompany, we are to go not from an asymmetric position of sufficiency and paternalism, but rather from a shared place of equality (acknowledging the subjectivity and dignity of the other), being ready to be accompanied as well, as far as recognizing and working in the wealth of diversity. It might be noted how in everyday life and even in the life of faith, ambiguous representations are often involved (trying to "help" people without assuming a shared responsibility). How many times do we sustain aims of the type "we must help our young people and accompany them, giving them a future of hope"? Rather, isn't it about helping one another and building from the present?

In this context, it is pertinent to mention the *institutional phantom*, this collection of representations and anxieties about which institutions/organizations would come to resolve in the most secret and unknown way for the subjects. This maintains silenced those sayings, which cannot be said. That is why this phantom, through a fall back, intends to hide those practices and assumptions that some challenges may question. As was said, the challenges are to come from youth, but not only from youth. What is more, according to the questionnaires, some of those in the churches of the Southern Cone seemed to be the ones who need the "mighty fortress", institutional cohesion of the Church guided by Christ. They embody challenges as a symbol, as the widely mentioned "prophetic voice" --what is prophetic for our contexts? For sure, not old structures.

Several keys lay in the same premises by which the churches promote that their people (especially the youth, but all) live their experiences of faith strengthened through "communion". How can we expect equal relationships among LWF member churches while keeping unequal relationships (e.g.: gerontocracy) within each of many churches? To empower partner relationships becomes a major responsibility of all--not only of youth nor only of adults. This is quite different to an isolated and individualistic way, "fashionable" nowadays, like that belief in the goodness of the Market as a faith system.

Some of those challenges may be seen in previous pages, and they may also apply to the work of the LWF/DMD, which also influenced this study. But those challenges are not about destroying the economy--which is fundamental for human social life. Or about becoming isolated, assuming the position of world saviors--which would locate people in an ingenuous and asymmetric

position (superior) towards our neighbor--making any dialogue and Mission difficult. It is rather intended to challenge and question the present and past forms which perpetuate inequality and/or exclusion (even when they infiltrate through "egalitarian" speeches, as often happens). And this could be done by the hand of wealth and diversity of faith expressions, including those of daily life.

Many of these observations and conclusions might be seen as old ones from certain points of view, especially from other regions. However, it is intended to keep reflecting on some of them, especially because we may always be able to find new, unknown phenomena. Which institution or human organization has completely reached its goals? There are always new aspects to work on or to develop, hidden asymmetries, new tensions and new challenges --these also become an impulse for transformation. And that is also why *faith* always exists.

Rather than embodying only a *highly structuring stimulus*, this study may become a resource similar to the form of the *mixed type questions*. That is to say, all dilemmas have not yet been fully resolved or brought to a final conclusion, but you are invited to continue to discuss and act "by argumentation or by reaction"[33].

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[33] As described in the methodology for the questionnaires, quoted in chapter I.

VII. ... And Some Proposals

We may then consider some suggestions:

- It is important to *assume the challenges coming from this dynamic and varied context*, not by trying to silence them defending obsolete structures and ways which are in decay nowadays (like gerontocracy or the passing of the baton). It is rather from a will to assume them, even though there is no answer or satisfactory solution available yet --as will happen in most cases, and this is why challenges are challenges. Tolerating lack of immediate understanding avoids illegitimate answers to rhetorical challenges --rhetorical not in the sense of language games, but as a challenge which itself is already part of "the new". How are young people's perspectives involved in the relationships, not only relating to important decisions, but also regarding daily micro sociology and social representations? It is not a matter of " youth representation" but a matter of considering new equal active tools. Challenges -and even crisis- are also chances for change rather than threats only. Evading them will just lead to a nearsighted vision therefore contributing to a membership-decrease process, which some churches in the region has been slightly experiencing last years. Is a challenge an obstacle, to keep things the way they are, or are we willing to work through it as an opportunity for growth? Or even both?

- The *leadership model,* and the concept of *"leadership"* itself, *shall be put on the table of an honest discussion*, not only to promote a "culture" of equality, but because the present challenges are calling us to this as well, if we want to exercise with responsibility in church and in society. "Leading" a community in a gerontocratic vertical way may drive the faith of many towards easier choices in a more attractive Market (still asymmetric), in which people are *allowed* to consume "more equally" (which implies "paying the price"). It is important to point out that nowadays gerontocracy may not be a matter of age, but a matter of structure. Mutual accountability, a highly advocated value in the Lutheran arena nowadays, involves also relations among different generations. Do we want more leaders with a vertical power domination? How are we going to encourage the empowerment of equal relationships?

- *To be consistent between words and actions*, especially when there is a conviction that youth (and churches' members in general) are to facilitate transformation rather than fitting into the structures. This is also a highly appreciated value of the youth. Although it might be thought that language is pure bla bla, terminology builds, solidifies or puts into question representations which influence our daily attitudes and concrete practice. The "ideological" factor also determines a furrow in the specific material life. There are more and more declarations and messages of and about youth in LWF, DMD and local churches documents and papers. However, only few of those proposals are usually concretized in several Southern Cone churches. To fill or not to fill the 20 % quota of youth delegates for the forthcoming X Assembly may became an example of the gap between declared commitments and factual reality. It is not only a matter of representation on the high spheres –as it may appear– but a matter of participation in the decision-making-process of the churches and the communion. It is also a question of the involvement sense of the youth. Do we act according to what we say? Do we want young people to conciliate speeches of equality with practices of

paternalism? Equality is not about being homogenized, but about acknowledging everyone's dignity while discerning the wealth of diversity.

- *To consider the manifestations of faith as being possible to happen beyond our representations about what faith is.* The latter, from a point of view such that all rich and increasing diversity may be welcome. To consider also the manifestations of faith from daily life. Many actions in everyday life involve our expressions of faith, through acts. To be sensitive to those faith expressions resulting on the basis of sacramental life (worship and/or social life) as well as those occurring on arenas which may not necessarily depend on the previous ones –let us take into account the 'secular' arenas. Are we aware of that? How do we channel those acts?

- *To accompany and at the same time to be ready to be accompanied.* To be critical of positions of sufficiency in a "community" when sharing with others is intended. Even during situations of high affective load, like faith expressions in community which go beyond rational ideas, this is essential when promoting relationships increasing links, a truly shared table. For example, the pastoral work in many congregations is often addressed to the elders and the persons who are ill--among others--but not on so many occasions to the those addicted to drugs, who do not always look for a "cure" for their addiction or paternalistic care, as they usually carry deep subjective and social pains. To involve those people close to us in the mutual accompanying process rather than defining "groups at risk" as handicapped. Thus, reaching neighbors in a rich and transforming way rather than paying the price of guilt by traditional beneficence or charity, which avoid accountability. Are we willing to accompany? Are we ready to be accompanied as well...?

* * *

VIII.   Some Topics for Group Discussion

1. What are the features of the present generation cycle in your own context?
2. What are the features that could not be generalized as part of a generation?
3. What aspects of the relationships in your community or church involve certain paternalism or gerontocracy?
4. What are the aspects promoting equal relationships?
5. How would you describe youth's influence in the decision-making of your church?
6. Do these features relate to your faith or the ways of living faith in your community? How?
7. What active tasks and commitments do you have in the church? And beyond or "outside" the church? How do these relate to your faith?
8. Is *Market-based faith* developed in your context? How?
9. What are the alternative ways which may be reliable through the community?
10. What other conclusions could you add to those from this study with regard to your context and reality?
11. How can some of these recommendations materialize in your context?
12. Do you have any other recommendations?

We will appreciate you sharing your results with us! Please write to:

> **Youth in Church and Society Desk**
> **The Lutheran World Federation**
> **Route de Ferney 150 - P.O. Box 2100**
> **CH 1211 - Geneva 2**
> **Switzerland**
>
> **e-mail:** tv@lutheranworld.org

Thank you!

Appendix 1: A Brief Glossary

Asymmetry: Difference, nonequivalence or inequality, of level or position. This does not refer to the quality (characteristic or attribute), but to the magnitude.

Reproductive cell: Minimum number of people required for both economical production (in order to survive) and species reproduction (perpetuation).

Ideology: Set of representations that establish imaginary relations of the subjects with their reality.

Imaginary (social): System of representations, values and ideas shared collectively, which effectively influence social life.

Incommensurable: Something that does not have any comparison or could hardly be measured.

Language: Human ability to transmit experiences through the use of symbols (representations that make present what is absent), beyond the fact that it is spoken, written, thought. We are to use Saussure's definition.

Latent: The hidden and non-visible thing, but with an effective and decisive influence.

Reality: Although nowadays people speak of many relative realities, for practical uses we are to understand reality as what is collectively perceivable by the senses.

Appendix 2: Questionnaire's fundamental contents

I - Personal & Church data
Name of the Church:
Age of the person:
City:

II - Faith
3. What is "spirituality" for you? [LS]
4. How spiritual do you think you are as a person? [MT]
5. How do you value your faith? [MS]
6. How do you value your religion? [MT]
7. How would you describe your faith experience? [LS]
8. How do you express faith? [LS]
9. When do you think you express faith? [LS]
10. What or who is God for you? [LS]
11. Does your faith drive you to do something? If affirmative, what? [MT]
12. What is more meaningful for you:
    Living faith on your own or living faith in community? Why? [MT]

III - Church
13. How active are you in organized activities in your church? (from 1 [minimum] to 10 [maximum possible], only one number) [HS]
14. How active are you in organized religious youth groups? (from 1 [minimum] to 10 [maximum possible], only one number) [HS]
15. What are the youth responsibilities at the decision-making levels of your church? [MS]
16. How do you see your church as a faith-sharing community? [BS]
17. a. What has brought you into or kept you in your current church? *And/or:*
    b. What has kept you away from or driven you away from your home church? [MS]
18. a. What would bring you into or keep you in your current church? *And:*
    b. What would keep you away from or drive you away from your home church? [MS]

IV - Youth
19. What makes you feel more included? [MS]
20. What makes you feel happier in your everyday life? [MS]
21. What makes you feel more frustrated? [MS]
22. How do you think your faith concretely relates to the world of today? [LS]
23. How do you think the church relates to the way you live faith presently? [LS]
24. How do you think the church relates concretely to the world today? [LS]
25. What is your main concern about life in the church today? [MS]
26. What is your main concern about the present world? [MS]
27. According to your point of view,
    are church and society actually integrated or separated? Why? [MT]
28. According to your point of view,
    are church and youth actually integrated or separated? Why? [MT]

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Born in Buenos Aires in 1975, Lucas Veira Sand holds a bachelor's degree in Psychology since 1998 (University of Buenos Aires). He originally comes from the United Evangelical Lutheran Church (Argentina & Uruguay). From his early childhood he was participating in the congregational life of the various Argentine cities were he has lived in.

As a person focused in History, Subjectivity and Social Representations he also studied Anthropology and followed post-degree studies on Psychoanalysis and Post-Structuralism philosophy (1999). Mr. Veira Sand taught Sociology in high school level as well.

In 1998, he participated in the group of young people who reestablished the Latin American youth networks in the Rodeio 12 Youth Consultation. From that time he was coordinating the Southern Cone sub-regional network until late 2000, when he joined LWF-YICAS for a ten-month internship. During that time, many of his duties were related to the Human Rights arena. Back in Buenos Aires in 2002, he advises the group who is leading the LA networks renewal and addressing the issue on the Economic Globalization process.